

## Kennebec River at Sidney-Vassalboro

Sidney, Vassalboro

Secondary priority

### Description

This half-mile or so reach of the Kennebec in Sidney and Vassalboro, with its adjacent uplands, is not one particular habitat, but rather supports various rare plants and animals in several different habitats. In addition, it is a large stretch of relatively undeveloped shoreline. On the rich alluvial soils of the shores, rare plants characteristic of enriched floodplain soils have been found: wild leek (Vassalboro side) and long-beaked sedge (Sidney side). Both records indicate the need for further inventory in the area, and several other Kennebec River floodplain herbs could be searched for: wild garlic (*Allium canadense*), showy orchis (*Galearis spectabilis*), wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), etc.

Eagles are seen along this stretch of the river, and nesting has been reported intermittently since the 1940s. Nesting was first documented here in 1996: a single nest between woodland patches along the outlet of Lily Pond, nested between two farms. Eagles nesting here have exhibited productivity higher than the statewide average since that time, and resident and transient eagles use the shores on both sides of the river.

In the river itself, the tidewater mucket, a rare mussel, was documented in 1996. Since that was before the removal of the Edwards Dam, the continued existence of that mussel here should be investigated: it may be elsewhere up and down the river.

West of the river itself, between the River Road, the Lyons Road, and the interstate, is an area of upland sandpiper habitat. This grassland bird is a rarity throughout the northeast. At least three pairs of upland sandpipers nest here, and do so consistently, which represents a fairly significant habitat. Other upland sandpiper nesting areas in Maine are chiefly in the sandplain grasslands of York County or the blueberry barrens Downeast, so this occurrence in a central Maine hayfield is unique. Along with the “uppies” here are meadowlarks, bobolinks, and savanna sparrows, which are also of some concern because of recent population declines regionally.

### Rare Species and Natural Communities Summary Table

Common Name	Latin Name	EO Rank	Global Rank	State Rank
Tidewater mucket	<i>Leptodea ochracea</i>	E	G4	S2
Upland sandpiper	<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>	E	G5	S3
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	E	G4	S4B
Long-beaked sedge	<i>Carex sprengelii</i>	E	G5	S1
Wild leek	<i>Allium canadense</i>		G5	S2

### **Other Resources Mapped by MDIFW**

None are mapped in the immediate area.

### **Protection Status**

The lands are all privately owned.

### **Conservation Considerations**

Information on the location and extent of the rare plant populations and the tidewater mucket should be updated. Additional surveys along the river could turn up new locations for these species.

The upland sandpiper habitat is currently being well managed by the private landowner. The most important consideration for these grassland-nesting birds is a large enough area of habitat—generally at least 100 acres—and when during the year the fields are mowed. Mowing in June, as is often done in active hayfields, will not allow the birds to fledge young. If mowing can be put off until at least mid-July, most of the nesting birds should be able to fledge a brood.

Appropriate conservation strategies for this area as a whole include open space treatments, conservation easements, and fee ownership.